USA TODAY INVESTIGATION

186,000 FUGITIVES ESCAPE BY CROSSING STATE LINES

More than 3,300 accused of sexual assaults, robberies, even murder, aren’t pursued

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PHILADELPHIA For a man on the run from charges that he sexually assaulted a 14-year-old girl, Thomas Terlecky has surprisingly little to fear from the law. The police here know where to find him, but they will not go get him.

Florida. As recently as November, police handcuffed Terlecky and called Philadelphia authorities to tell them their fugitive had been found. But just like every time before, the authorities in Philadelphia refused to take him back.

Across the United States, police and prosecutors are allowing tens of thousands of wanted felons — including more than 3,300 accused of sexual assault, robbery and murder — to escape the justice system.

“He got away with it. That makes me sick to my stomach. It’s disgraceful.”

across the country, leave crimes unpunished, they outraged and the public as well.

Each fugitive’s case is included in a confidential FBI database that police use to hunt outstanding warrants. In many of those cases, police have evidence that they would not p...